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ABSTRACT

The overwhelming number of drug abuse prevention curricula available to public schools often impedes the rational selection of a program based on sound prevention education strategies. Guidelines for the selection of either predeveloped or for developing curricula are included in this workbook. Suggestions for the formation of a district selection team and the organization of selection criteria are offered. Criteria are organized into the following categories: (1) goals and objectives; (2) content; (3) instructional methodologies; (4) learning opportunities; (5) materials; (6) time; (7) evaluation; and (8) district-specific criteria. Worksheets rate each curriculum to the degree that it meets each criterion. Weighted individual scores are added to generate a total curriculum score. After analysis and comparison of curricula, committee members are better prepared to reach a consensus. (6 references) (LMI)

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Criteria for the Selection of Drug Abuse Prevention Curricula: A Workbook

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Criteria for the Selection of Drug Abuse Prevention Curricula: A Workbook

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Western Center for Drug-Free Schools and Communities

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Introduction

The number of drug abuse prevention curricula currently available for purchase is overwhelming. One may become so inundated with these classroom instructional materials that a well reasoned selection process never occurs. Then, when the deadline is near, the curriculum that gets selected may be the one from the company with the best marketing strategies or the one that is best packaged rather than the one based on sound prevention education strategies.

The purpose of this workbook is to enable a district or school to select a drug abuse prevention curriculum that is educationally sound and effective. It was produced to assist in the selection of pre-developed curricula. However, the criteria may be easily adapted for use in developing curricula.

HOW TO USE THE WORKBOOK

Criteria Organization

The following criteria for selecting a drug abuse prevention curriculum are based on educational theory, research of effective drug prevention programs, and the practical application of those programs. The criteria are expressed in terms of the optimum, and are organized into the following categories:

A. Goals and Objectives
B. Content
C. Instructional Methodologies
D. Learning Opportunities
E. Materials
F. Time
G. Evaluation
H. District-specific Criteria

Preparation for Curriculum Selection

The first step in selecting a drug abuse prevention curriculum is to form a district selection team. Suggested members for this team include:

- district prevention specialist
- curriculum specialist
- teacher
- principal
- parent
- community drug abuse prevention professional
- student

The selection team needs to accomplish the following tasks:

1. *Develop a realistic, attainable goal for the curriculum.* One of the main reasons past prevention efforts have failed is because goals were so ambitious that they were virtually impossible to achieve. If the goal of a curriculum is meant to imply eradication, then it is unrealistic. The prevention of all drug abuse could be accomplished only through the elimination of drugs from society. In addition, it is unrealistic to expect that a school-based curriculum would have that degree of impact alone, without the support of other school and community programs. The goals that the curriculum itself may attain must be within reason, given the school's resources and level of commitment, in order for it to be successful.
2. *Agree on the definition of a drug.* Not everyone agrees on what is a drug and what isn't. These varying definitions make it difficult to select curricula. The issues of what is a drug, as well as the drugs on which the curriculum will focus, need to be addressed prior to the curriculum selection process.
3. *Come to consensus on what is drug abuse and acceptable use, especially as it relates to alcohol.* The definition of drug abuse is even more varied than that of a drug. Some people feel "responsible" drinking is acceptable. Others believe that any drug use is abuse. These issues need to be discussed at length so that the messages portrayed through the curriculum are consistent and strong.
4. *Decide on additional criteria that the team thinks is important.* There may be criteria other than those given in this workbook that the team may want to consider. These criteria will be specific to the district or school.
5. *Determine budget constraints.* The prices of existing curricula vary. In order to expedite and simplify the selection process, districts need to determine how much money may realistically be spent on curricula. Many curricula may be eliminated quite easily, regardless of their quality, because of budget constraints.

Once these tasks have been completed, the team is ready to begin the selection process.

Using the Selection Criteria

The criteria that follow are meant to be used as a guide to systematically simplify the selection process while at the same time make it more educationally sound. It has not, however, been scientifically tested with all available curricula.

Using the Selection Criteria (continued)

Since most available curricula do not cover all K-12 grades, it is suggested that the criteria be utilized to evaluate one curriculum at each grade level rather than using the one form to evaluate all the grades within a curriculum.

Initially, each team member should rate each curriculum independently. The curriculum is to be analyzed according to the degree that it meets the criterion: completely, to some degree, not at all. In addition, if the curriculum meets the criterion to some degree, the percentage to which it is met is noted: 75%, 50%, 25%. The score for each criterion should be circled, based on the analysis. There is space next to the rating of each criterion for comments and to specifically note what is lacking or is exceptionally good. Finally, the total score for each category is tallied and transferred to page 16 for easier analysis of all curricula analyzed.

After that task has been completed, the committee may discuss any large discrepancies, coming to a consensus about the best curriculum for the district. Curriculum may be selected utilizing one of the following processes:

1. Select one curriculum from an array of products.
2. Select one curriculum based on its own merits, without comparing it to others.
3. Develop a list of acceptable curricula from which individual schools may select.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goals are the long range results toward which the curriculum is directed. Objectives are a listing of what the students will be able to do at the conclusion of the curricular program. Cogniive objectives are those objectives that develop intellectual abilities and skills. Affective objectives describe changes in interest, attitudes, and values.

Criteria	Degree criterion is met				Needs/Comments
	Completely	To some degree		Not at all	
		75%	50%	25%	
1. The goals and objectives are *realistically* attainable.	5	4	3	2	1	
2. Goals and objectives are related to the district's identified needs.	5	4	3	2	1	
3. Objectives are well-defined, behavioral, and measurable.	5	4	3	2	1	
4. Objectives describe both long-term and short-term outcomes.	5	4	3	2	1	
5. Objectives include a strong focus on prevention.	5	4	3	2	1	
6. Program includes both cognitive and affective objectives.	5	4	3	2	1	

TOTAL SCORE: _____ of 30

CONTENT

The content refers to the subject matter included in the curriculum.

Criteria	Degree criterion is met					Needs/Comments
	Completely	To some degree			Not at all	
		75%	50%	25%		
1. Curriculum contains appropriate continuity, scope, and sequence for the grade level.	5	4	3	2	1	
2. Content is comprehensive in nature.	5	4	3	2	1	
3. Content is integrated into a variety of other subject matter.	5	4	3	2	1	
4. Content is part of a comprehensive health promotion curriculum.	5	4	3	2	1	
5. Content is accurate, valid, and current.	5	4	3	2	1	
6. Content reflects district's/school's definition of a drug.	5	4	3	2	1	
7. Content reflects district's/school's definition of drug abuse.	5	4	3	2	1	
8. Curriculum contains content of effective drug prevention programs.						
• short-term, social consequences of use	5	4	3	2	1	
• clarification of normative beliefs	5	4	3	2	1	
• stress reduction	5	4	3	2	1	
• communication skills	5	4	3	2	1	
• decision-making process	5	4	3	2	1	
• influences to use drugs	5	4	3	2	1	
• friendship development	5	4	3	2	1	

TOTAL SCORE: _____ of 70

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODOLOGIES

Instructional methodologies are the activities or strategies used *by the teacher* to facilitate student learning.

Criteria	Degree criterion is met					Needs/Comments
	Completely	To some degree			Not at all	
		75%	50%	25%		
1. The curriculum utilizes a variety of instructional methodologies.	5	4	3	2	1	
2. The curriculum utilizes methodologies of effective drug abuse prevention programs:						
• role playing	5	4	3	2	1	
• socratic instruction (questioning)	5	4	3	2	1	
• small group discussions	5	4	3	2	1	
• little didacticism (preaching, moralizing)	5	4	3	2	1	
3. The instructional methodologies takes into account the cultural and ethnic values, customs, and practices of the community.	5	4	3	2	1	

TOTAL SCORE: _____ of 30

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Learning opportunities are the activities engaged in *by the students* to help them achieve the curricular objectives.

Criteria	Degree criterion is met					Needs/Comments
	Completely	To some degree			Not at all	
		75%	50%	25%		
1. The curriculum provides students with a variety of opportunities to learn knowledge and practice skills related to the program objectives.	5	4	3	2	1	
2. The curriculum utilizes learning opportunities of effective drug prevention programs with activities focused on:						
• decision-making	5	4	3	2	1	
• skill rehearsal	5	4	3	2	1	
• critical analysis	5	4	3	2	1	
• values identification	5	4	3	2	1	
• goal setting	5	4	3	2	1	
3. The curriculum provides meaningful homework activities.	5	4	3	2	1	
4. Activities foster higher order thinking among students.	5	4	3	2	1	

TOTAL SCORE: _____ of 40

MATERIALS

The materials are items utilized by teachers or students that are a part of the curricular package.

Criteria	Degree criterion is met					Needs/Comments
	Completely	To some degree			Not at all	
		75%	50%	25%		
1. Materials are current and valid.	5	4	3	2	1	
2. Materials are appropriate for the target population.	5	4	3	2	1	
3. Materials are relevant to the program objectives.	5	4	3	2	1	
4. Materials are free from cultural, ethnic, and sex bias and stereotypes.	5	4	3	2	1	
5. Materials are easily accessible.	5	4	3	2	1	
6. Materials may easily be used by teachers, containing clear format and direction.	5	4	3	2	1	
7. Materials are aesthetically pleasing and of high quality.	5	4	3	2	1	
8. Materials are durable and safe.	5	4	3	2	1	
9. Materials are within the budget constraints of the program.	5	4	3	2	1	
10. The structure of the curriculum allows it to be easily updated.	5	4	3	2	1	
11. References are provided for teachers.	5	4	3	2	1	

TOTAL SCORE: _____ of 55

TIME

Time refers to the time spent implementing the curriculum.

Criteria	Degree criterion is met					Needs/Comments
	Completely	To some degree			Not at all	
		75%	50%	25%		
1. The program is of adequate time and intensity to meet all objectives	5	4	3	2	1	
2. The amount of time allotted for each lesson fits the scheduling needs of the instructor.	5	4	3	2	1	

TOTAL SCORE: _____ of 10

EVALUATION

The evaluation includes assessments done during the curriculum's development as well as implementation.

Criteria	Degree criterion is met					Needs/Comments
	Completely	To some degree			Not at all	
		75%	50%	25%		
1. The program was thoroughly evaluated prior to dissemination.	5	4	3	2	1	
2. Evaluation was clearly linked to all program objectives.	5	4	3	2	1	
3. The evaluation shows evidence of changes in attitude.	5	4	3	2	1	
4. The evaluation shows evidence of an increase in knowledge.	5	4	3	2	1	
5. The evaluation shows evidence of a reduction in drug use by program participants.	5	4	3	2	1	
6. The program provides for ongoing evaluation by the program implementers.	5	4	3	2	1	

TOTAL SCORE: _____ of 30

DISTRICT-SPECIFIC CRITERIA

District-specific criteria include any additional requirements an individual district wants to make.

Criteria	Degree criterion is met					Needs/Comments
	Completely	To some degree			Not at all	
		75%	50%	25%		
1.	5	4	3	2	1	
2.	5	4	3	2	1	
3.	5	4	3	2	1	
4.	5	4	3	2	1	
5.	5	4	3	2	1	
6.	5	4	3	2	1	

TOTAL SCORE: _____

Summary of Curricula Analyses

Curriculum Title	Grade	Goals & Objectives (30)	Content (70)	Instructional Methodologies (30)	Learning Opportunities (40)	Materials (55)	Time (10)	Evaluation (30)	District-specific Criteria	TOTAL

Additional References for Further Reading

Drug Prevention: Curriculum and Resource Review
National Federation of Parents for Drug-Free Youth
8730 Georgia Avenue, Suite 200
Silver Spring, MD 20910
(301) 585-KIDS

Criteria for Assessing Alcohol Education Programs
California State Department of Education
Publications Sales
P.O. Box 271
Sacramento, CA 95802

Guidelines for School-Based Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention Programs
California State Department of Education
Publications Sales
P.O. Box 271
Sacramento, CA 95802

Curricula and Programs for Drug and Alcohol Education
Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
101 S.W. Main Street, Suite 500
Portland, OR 97204

Schools and Drugs: A Guide to Drug and Alcohol Abuse
Prevention Curricula and Programs
Crime Prevention Center
Office of the Attorney General
1515 K Street, Suite 511
Sacramento, CA 94244-2550

Report to Congress and the White House on the Nature and Effectiveness of Federal, State, and Local Drug Prevention/Education Programs
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, S.W.
Washington, DC 20202